तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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Chanters Should be Pure

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Observing the kīrtana of the associates of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Maharaja Pratapraruda said, "Upon seeing all these devotees, I am very much astonished, for I have never seen such an effulgence. Indeed, their effulgence is like the brilliance of a million suns. Nor have I ever heard the Lord's names chanted so melodiously." (*Cc. madhya* 11.94-95. Purport follows.)

Such are the symptoms of pure devotees when they are chanting. All the pure devotees are as bright as sunshine, and their bodily luster is very effulgent. In addition, their performance of *saṅkīrtana* is unparalleled. There are many professional chanters who can perform congregational chanting with various musical instruments in an artistic and musical way, but their chanting cannot be as attractive as the congregational chanting of pure devotees. If a devotee sticks strictly to the principles governing *vaiṣṇava* behavior, his bodily luster will naturally be attractive, and his singing and chanting of the holy names of the Lord will be effective. People will appreciate such *kīrtana* without hesitation. Even dramas about the pastimes of Lord Chaitanya or Sri Krishna should be played by devotees. Such dramas will immediately interest an audience and be full of potency. The students of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness should note these two points and try to apply these principles in their spreading of the Lord's glories. (Purport to *Cc. madhya* 11.95)

The *saṅkīrtana* movement can be spread by a person who is especially favored by Lord Krishna (*kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana*). Without first obtaining the mercy of the Lord, one cannot spread the holy name of the Lord. One who can spread the Lord's name is called *labdha-caitanya* in the words of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati. The *labdha-caitanya* is one who has actually awakened his original consciousness, Krishna consciousness. The influence of the pure devotees in Krishna consciousness is such that it can awaken others to become immediately Krishna conscious and engage themselves in the transcendental loving service of Krishna. In this way the descendants of pure devotees increase, and Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu takes much pleasure in seeing the increase of His devotees. The word *su-medhasaḥ* means

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"sharply intelligent." When one's intelligence is sharp, he can increase the interests of common men in loving Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and through Him in loving Radha-Krishna. Those not interested in understanding Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu are simply material in their attempts at professional chanting and dancing for money, despite their supposed artistry. If one does not have full faith in Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, he cannot properly chant and dance in the *saṅkīrtana* movement. Artificial chanting and dancing may be due to sentiments or sentimental agitation, but this cannot help one advance in Krishna consciousness. (Purport to *Cc. madhya* 11.102)

Follow my example as I did in the beginning at 26 2nd Ave. That is, preaching, cooking, writing, talking, chanting — everything a one man's show. I never thought about the audience. I was prepared to chant if there were no man to hear me. The principle of chanting is to glorify the Lord and not to attract a crowd. If Krishna hears nicely then he will ask some sincere devotee to gather in such a place. Therefore, be advised that thousands of centers may be started if we find out a sincere soul for each and every center. We do not require more men to start. (Letter to Brahmananda, 11 November 1967)

Practicing is already done by *kīrtana*. It is not required for us to become artists. Our main point is service to Krishna, not to please an audience. We shall not divert our attention too much to adjustment of musical sounds. People should not misunderstand that we are a band of musical artists. They must know that we are devotees of Krishna. Our devotional practice and purity shall be so strong that wherever we chant there will be immediately an impression in the audience for devotion to Krishna. (Letter to Tamal Krishna, 30 October 1969) ❀

Useless Opinions

Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode

Śrī Chaitanya-śīkṣāmṛta *3.3*

The devotees should learn the scriptures concerning devotion and those works that conform to the conclusions, but to read small parts of large works and then leave them due to lack of time should not be done. The devotee should read a work thoroughly, otherwise he will become uselessly opinionated — a professional debater. There are some people who take pleasure in arguing with any statement that they hear, whether good or bad. This is forbidden for the devotee. ❀

— Bhaktivinode Thakur. *Śrī Chaitanya-śikṣāmṛta*. English translation by Sri Bhanu Swami. Vrindavan Institute for Higher Education.

Birth of a Devotee

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

Question: When a devotee is born in a family, does that family benefit from his or her birth?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta: When a great saint, a pure devotee, appears in a family, then his ancestors and descendants for a hundred generations each are elevated. When a devotee of the middle stature (*madhyama bhāgavata*) appears in a family, then his ancestors and descendants for fourteen generations each are elevated. When a neophyte devotee appears in a family, then his ancestors and descendants for three generations each are elevated.

Question: Why are devotees sometimes born in low-class families? If devotees are not subject to the results of their actions (karma), then why are they sometimes illiterate or disease-ridden?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta: Devotees are never subject to the result of their karma. It is by the will of the Lord that they take birth and perform other pastimes. But when it is seen that they are born in low-class families, are illiterate, or are disease-ridden, we should know that there is a great or noble purpose behind it. If people saw that devotees were always born in high-class families or were always strong or educated, then they would become discouraged. So the merciful Lord, in order to benefit people of all classes, sends his devotees to different classes of society to give his mercy to other living entities. This is something like catching a wild male elephant by sending a trained female elephant. Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur has said in the *Caitanya-bhāgavata* that a *vaiṣṇava* delivers everyone just by taking birth. In a land and in a family where a *vaiṣṇava* descends, many hundreds of miles around that place become purified by his influence. Even if you see some external misery in a *vaiṣṇava*'s life, you should know that he is in great ecstasy. Those who are blinded by pride in their material possessions do not know any of these things. Intoxicated with pride in their education, money, and family, they do not recognize a *vaiṣṇava*.

If a devotee appears in a low-class family, then we should not think that it is a result of his sin that he was subject to the result of his action. Rather, we should know that he has purified a low-class family. If a good person becomes successful only in the devotional process, then we should consider him a great soul. ✿

— Excerpted from *Prabhupada Saraswati Thakur*. Mandala Publishing Group. Eugene, Oregon. 1997.

Pundarik Vidyanidhi's Worship of the Ganga

Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur's
Chaitanya-Bhāgavat madhya *7.25-29*

with purports of
Prabhupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur

gaṅgā-snāna nā karena pada-sparśa-bhaye
gaṅgā daraśana kare niśāra samaye

He [Pundarik Vidyanidhi] would not take bath in the Ganges, for he feared touching her waters with his feet. He would take *darśana* of the Ganges only at night.

PURPORT: He did not take bath in the Ganges to cleanse his sinful reactions like ordinary people who are engaged in fruitive activities. But since he had strong respect and unshakable faith in the waters that have emanated from the lotus feet of Vishnu, and though he did not take bath because he feared touching the water with his feet, he avoided the vision of the public and took *darśana* of Sri Ganga at night.

gaṅgāya ye-saba loka kare anācara
kullola, danta-dhāvana, keśa-saṁskāra

Many people disrespect the Ganges by rinsing their mouths, brushing their teeth, and washing their hair in her waters.

e sakala dekhiyā pāyena mane vyathā
eteke dekhena gaṅgā niśāya sarvathā

On seeing these activities, he feels pain at heart. For this reason he goes to see the Ganges at night.

PURPORT: The *vaiṣṇavas* of the Sri Ramanuja-sampradaya, who worship the Lord with awe and reverence, do not take bath in the waters of the Ganges. They purify themselves by simply sprinkling Ganges water on their heads. Although persons who are envious of the *vaiṣṇavas* know that the Ganges has emanated from the lotus feet of Vishnu, they knowingly or unknowingly wash their mouths and brush their teeth with that water. Since the exalted devotee Pundarik had strong devotion for Vishnu, he was extremely pained to see this behavior of the nondevotees. That is why he avoided the vision of those ordinary people and took *darśana* and honored the spiritual waters of the Ganges at night.

vicitra viśvāsa āra eka śuna tāna
devārcana-pūrve kare gaṅgā-jala pāna

Now hear another of his wonderful characteristics. He drinks the water of the Ganges before worshiping the Lord.

tabe se karena pūjā-ādi-nitya-karma
ihā sarva-paṇḍitere bujhāyena dharma

Then he worships the Lord and executes his other regular duties. In this way he teaches religious principles to all learned scholars.

PURPORT: Ordinary proud learned scholars take bath in the Ganges in order to cleanse their own sinful reactions. But Pundarik drank Ganges water before beginning his worship to reveal the glories of the Ganges. This proper conduct for the worship of the Lord was followed by many. ✿

— Vrindavan Das Thakur. *Śrī Chaitanya-bhāgavata* with commentary of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. English translation by Bhumipati Das. Edited and published by Pundarik Vidyanidhi Das. Vrajaraj Press. Vrindavan. 2001.

Lord Rama Goes to the Ganga

Accounts of the Life of Lord Rama
Rendered into poetry in 1953 by
the Reverend A. G. Atkins

For more about the Christian missionary Rev. Atkins, see Bindu 116.

With Sumant, the two brothers and Sita the fair,
Came at length to a village by name Shringaber;

Here Rama, the fair Ganges river beholding,
Got out and bowed rev'rently, hands humbly folding;

His three fellow trav'llers paid rev'rent salute;
With them Rama found gladness, this bright vision's fruit;

For the Ganges brings blessing wherever she flows;
She destroys ev'ry sorrow and pleasure bestows.

As Rama stood watching the river's waves dancing,

He told many things of her bright and entrancing;

To th' minister, Lakshman and Sita, in stories
He spoke of the heav'nly stream's grandeur and glories.

They bathed in it, drank of it; thus all fatigue
Of the journey took wings after many a league.

Not in truth, but as man speaks, of him do we say
"He was tired," thoughts of whom will all burdens allay.

Rama-truth, wisdom, bliss; of the Sun-Race the banner,

All pure, faith of all men attracting,

To bear as a bridge o'er life's boisterous billows,

The part of a man here was acting. ✿

— Page 556. *The Ramayana of Tulsidas*. Published by Shri Krishna Janmasthan Seva-sansthan. Mathura, India. 1987.

Prayers to Ganga Devi

Kapila-saṁhitā 2.24-27

Traditional Sanskrit histories of places in India are known as "Sthala-purāṇas". Kapila-saṁhitā *is one such literature, describing the history of Sri Kshetra, ancient Orissa.*

☛

namāmi devīṁ pāpa-ghnīṁ jāhnavī-bhakta-vatsalām
trailokya-pāvanīṁ tvaṁ hi raksa māṁ śaraṇāgatam

I bow down to goddess Jahnavi, destroyer of all sins, kind to the devotees, and purifier of the three worlds. I surrender myself. Please protect me!

sarva-pāpa-kṣaya-karī sarva-lokārta-nāśinī
pūjyā tvaṁ sarva-devais tu tvāṁ nato'smi punaḥ punaḥ

You are the remover of all sins, the destroyer of the misery of all the worlds, and are worthy of honor and adoration by all the gods. I bow down to you again and again.

giri-jā-nātha śirasi sthitā tvaṁ jana-pāvinī
tvāṁ nato'smi sthitāṁ gaṅgā pitāmaha-kamaṅdalau

O Ganga! For sanctifying the people you reside on the head of the master of the daughter of the Himalayas, Lord Shiva. I bow down to you, who reside in the water-pot of Lord Brahma.

viṣṇoḥ pādābja-jāṁ tvāṁ hi bhagīratha-vara-pradām
praṇato 'smi mahābhāgāṁ pāvinīṁ sagarātma-jān

I bow down to the illustrious goddess who had her birth from the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu, who blessed Bhagiratha with boons, and who had made the sons of Sagar sinless. ✿

— English translation with critical study by Pramila Mishra. New Bharatiya Book Corporation. Delhi. 2005.

Visiting the Ganga

***Padma Purāṇa* 7.9.28-30**

gaṅgā-yātrā su-kartavyaṁ nānyat karma-vicakṣaṇaiḥ
gaṅgā-tīre prayāge tu vāṇijya-pramukhāni ca

kāryāṇi kurute yas tu tat puṇyarddhaṁ vinaśyati
janma janmārjitaṁ pāpaṁ svalpaṁ vā yadi vā bahu

gaṅgā devī prasādena sarvaṁ meyāsy ati-kṣayam
ity uktvā parama-prītaḥ prājño gaṅgā taṭaṁ vrajet

Wise persons should not undertake any other work during pilgrimages to the Ganga. One who engages in business or trade on the bank of the Ganga or at Prayaga loses half of their religious merit. "All my sins, great or small, that have been committed in life after life will perish simply by the mercy of the Goddess Ganga." Saying this, a wise person should with great delight go to the bank of the Ganga. ✿

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